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Chief Probation Officer

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES PROBATION DEPARTMENT

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November 4, 2005

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Paul Higa *Charlene Vartanian for PH*
Chief Probation Officer

SUBJECT: DISTURBANCE AT CAMP GLENN ROCKEY

On October 25, 2005, on motion by Supervisor Antonovich, the Board directed the Probation Department to provide a full report regarding a major disturbance at Camp Glenn Rockey. This report is to include the protocols for responding to a major disturbance, the staffing level at the camp, the factors attributing to the incident and the utilization of programs that are geared toward quelling racial tensions.

SUMMARY OF INCIDENT

On October 22, 2005, at approximately 7:30 p.m., a major racial disturbance between African-American and Hispanic minors occurred at Camp Rockey. This event included multiple fights, significant facility damage and minor injuries to staff and minors. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department was called for assistance and by 9:04 p.m. the facility was secured.

There were 118 minors assigned to the camp. When this incident occurred, five minors were out of camp at a special event and several other minors were in the Special Housing Unit. There were ten staff on duty; two staff were assigned to the Special Housing Unit, leaving eight staff to cover all remaining facility assignments.

At approximately 6:30 p.m., the minors were taken outside for a recreation period. A Deputy Probation Officer (DPO) noticed a number of Hispanic minors shift together from one location to another, facing picnic tables where several African-American minors were seated. As he had previously confronted minors about inappropriately gathering along racial lines, he asked the DPO in charge of the period to conclude recreation.

The recreation period was ended and the minors were instructed to line up by living group to return to the dormitory. Simultaneously, the Acting Supervisor and

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a second DPO left the office to assist with supervision. At this point, six staff were on the recreation field.

By approximately 7:30 p.m., nearly everyone was lined up to return to their living units when a fight occurred between an African-American and a Hispanic minor. Staff intervened and stopped the fight. Thereafter, a significant number of minors started to chant "SUR" (a term uniting Southern California Hispanic gang members) and someone yelled, "riot". Other minors yelled, "Sewer Rats" to disrespect those minors that had chanted "SUR." Racial slurs were exchanged and multiple fights ensued. Loose bricks and other objects were thrown back and forth. Staff made continued efforts to gain compliance and were at times momentarily successful but fights continued to erupt.

Per Probation Department protocol, if staff are unable to reestablish security in the facility, local law enforcement assistance shall be summoned. At 7:33 p.m., the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department was called and the Sheriff's emergency log indicates that they were called for assistance. The log entry read, "...county camp has a riot...150+ juvies fighting..."

Probation staff tried to separate the factions that were fighting and remove minors who did not want to be involved in this incident from the field to the office, the dormitory and the Special Housing Unit. Staff continued to try and regain control via verbal commands and the public address system. Groups of wards were observed running wildly around the facility and vandalizing the dormitory, the school and the female staff quarters. Multiple windows were broken. Mops and brooms were stolen from the supply room in the dormitory. Fire hoses were removed and used to spray other minors. Some minors covered their faces with their clothing.

Several minors entered the dining hall, and then the kitchen. A set of facility keys was stolen from the kitchen and later was recovered during the investigation process.

Approximately 15 to 20 minutes after the initial call and after assembling nearby, the first Sheriff's Department units from the San Dimas station arrived at Camp Rockey. Staff statements indicate that despite this additional presence, the minors were still uncooperative, taunting and throwing things toward Sheriff's Deputies. Additional resources continued to arrive from other locations until approximately 8:45 p.m.

Sheriff's personnel formed a scrimmage line and gathered the minors that were outside together in a grassy area between the gymnasium and the Special

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Housing Unit. The minors were handcuffed by Probation staff and housed in the gymnasium. Once inside, the minors were told to be quiet. According to the Sheriff's report, the minors became verbally argumentative and a minor yelled, "get up." To encourage compliance, a Sheriff's Deputy fired a pepper ball above the minors; no one was hit. At that point, the minors complied.

Five minors sustained injuries that required medical attention. They were transported to the hospital for treatment and released. Two staff also suffered minor injuries. By 9:04 p.m., the facility was secured. Thereafter, the minors were relocated without incident by Probation Transportation to the Challenger Memorial Youth Center, Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall and Central Juvenile Hall.

A team of Probation Supervisors and Directors have interviewed the camp minors, and on-duty staff statements have been requested. The 9-1-1 tape and incident report were obtained from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Facility repairs have been completed and inventory replaced. The District Attorney's office in Pomona will be collaborating with this Department regarding petition filing. It appears there will be a minimum of five petitions filed.

DISTURBANCE PROTOCOLS

Probation Department emergency protocol requires the following actions in the event of a serious disturbance.

If the situation cannot be controlled by on-site camp staff, the Director or Acting Director shall:

- Call 9-1-1 and request immediate assistance from law enforcement
- Attempt to isolate non-participants from those actively engaged in the activity to attempt to contain the incident and safeguard non-participant minors
- Notify the Director if not on site and then the Residential Treatment Services Bureau Chief

FINDINGS

The magnitude of this disturbance represents a highly unusual occurrence within the Probation camp system. Based on the information to date, several areas are clear:

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1. The disturbance occurred as a result of tensions between Hispanic and African-American minors. The discord appears largely racial in nature, although there are gang undertones as well.
2. While staff, religious volunteers, and other community-based organizations may discuss issues of tolerance and respect, there is currently no formal program dealing with racial tensions.
3. Some minors indicated that this incident was premeditated; however, many did not take the threats seriously.
4. The number of staff on site was in compliance with Title 15, Section 1321 of the Corrections Standards Authority minimum staffing regulations, requiring one staff member per fifteen minors during daytime hours.
5. Staff followed expected procedures with respect to emergency protocols. Staff attempted to separate non-involved minors from those actively participating. Law enforcement was called only after staff concluded they could not achieve control.
6. While mops and brooms were fashioned into weapons by some minors, there was no indication that other weapons were involved.
7. Five minors and two Probation staff sustained minor injuries. All were treated and released.
8. The facility maintenance process failed to reveal the presence of multiple loose bricks and have them removed.
9. Facility keys that were stolen from the kitchen had been stored in the kitchen, contrary to policy.
10. Forty-five windows were broken with an estimated replacement cost of \$10,706; all windows have been repaired.
11. A computer system within a school classroom was damaged.
12. Although the opportunity existed for major injuries to have occurred to minors and staff, minors did not seriously injure anyone.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Review staffing patterns to assess the need for increased staffing to provide better supervision of minors.
2. Camp staff are to conduct regular town hall meetings with camp youth to create opportunities for dialogue.
3. Install closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras in all camp facilities.
4. Enhance night visibility by upgrading field lighting.
5. Review the facility inspection and maintenance process; corrective action to be taken against staff that failed to properly secure facility keys.
6. Collaborate with community-based organizations, including Amer-I-Can, Communities in Schools, and the Community Self Determination Institute to facilitate discussions with camp minors to reduce racial tensions and promote respect for diversity.
7. Review protocols at all camps as to how staff should handle major disturbance/riot situations.
8. Plans are to return minors to camp on Tuesday, November 8, 2005.

If you have questions, please let me know or contact Charlene Vartanian, Acting Bureau Chief for the Residential Treatment Services Bureau at (562) 940-2694.

PH:CV:ld

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
Honorable Michael Nash, Presiding Judge, Children's Court
Raymond Fortner, County Counsel
Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors